The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

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THE ANNIVERSARIES.

The 55th Anniversary of the Unitarian Society, with which is connected the Northern Sunday School Association, was celebrated on Easter Sunday, April 25th, and the two following days. The preacher of the year was the Rev. Dr. G. Vance Smith, President of Carmarthen College. In the morning and evening he preached in the Church of the Second Congregation, Belfast, and in the afternoon at Moneyrea. After the sermons collections were made on behalf of the Society. The collection at Rosemary Street amounted to £31 16s 10d, and at Moneyrea to £3 16s 0d.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CONFERENCE.

A Conference of Sunday School teachers and others interested in Sunday School work was held at Comber, on Easter Monday, April 26th, at four o'clock. There was a good attendance. Among those present were—The Revs. Dr. Vance Smith, James C. Street, Thomas Dunkerley, B.A. *(pastor loci)*; J. A. Kelly, E. Solly Anthony, M.A.; G.W. Bannister, and Messrs. Thos. M'Clelland, J.P.; John R. Neill, D. Bulmer, James Davidson, Thomas Andrews, Blakely Orr, A. K. Stewart, R. H. Todd, H. J. Fisher, Dr. John Polly, H. D. Darbishire, B.A., &c.

The Rev. Thos. Dunkerley, President of the Unitarian Society, having taken the chair, the proceedings were opened with a hymn and prayer.

Mr. Dunkerley then said that he need not dwell on the object of this Conference, as all present were perfectly well acquainted with it. He desired to thank those present for not allowing themselves to be drawn aside on that beautiful day, and in that holiday season. The speaker then proceeded to compare the mode of education followed at the present day with that pursued some years ago. He said Wesley had instituted a school, at which the regulations were very severe. One of them prevented any child coming to the school except on the understanding that it should not be absent one day until its education was completed. The speaker quoted many instances, both in France and other places, in which the punishments inflicted on children had been extraordinarily severe in days not so very long since; but he said now they were inclined almost to go to the opposite extreme, and give way too much to the whims and fancies of the children. He related in proof of this an incident that occurred in France. A gentleman and his wife were invited out to tea at a friend's house. But when the hour arrived they did not turn up, and their friends, after waiting some time, made up their minds that they were not coming, and went on with their tea. About 9 o'clock they arrived, however, and said that their little child had insisted on them both going to bed with it, and they, to humour it, had stayed there till it was asleep.

They were met there that day to hear a paper from Mr. Kelly, entitled, "Some considerations on the education of young people." He was sure the essayist would give them a useful and instructive paper.

Mr. Kelly then read his paper, which we hope to be able to print in its entirety in our next number.

Mr. Bannister, in response to an invitation from the Chairman, opened the proceedings. He said that he would much have preferred not to have been selected to open the discussion, and he only did so on the condition that, if he

desired, he might say something at a later period. He said the question to him was, What are we to teach of a positive kind? The essayist spoke of the Bible, and he hardly agreed with what he said on that point. It was one of the most difficult things to tell how to use the Bible. From it we get our highest religious ideas; but in it we get social ideas and prejudices which it would be injudicious to use indiscriminately. If there were things there which ought not to be brought into contact with the pure mind of the child we must recognize that fact. He had reverence for the truth in the Bible, but not for the Bible. If it was to be used in our Sunday Schools it ought to be used very carefully. The essayist had advocated the teaching of our special theology. Ever since the time of Locke, it had been generally accepted as a fact that the minds of children were like a blank sheet of paper when they come into this world. They would be subject to every influence; and he would have them, above all things, to teach them to be true to themselves and obedient to truth. We should teach them that, and to use their powers freely, and not frighten them with being damned eternally if they don't accept certain dogmas. Unitarians have no creed to force upon children. What, then, are we to teach them? Secular education used to be the right thing, but now that is no longer necessary. We have a higher work than this; but he should like the Conference to discuss, What are we to teach the children?

Mr. Davidson said that in common with everyone who had heard the paper, he felt the importance of the subject, especially to men like himself, fathers of families. He would be very sorry to teach his children merely the newest scientific idea, or that they should speak otherwise than with reverence of the holy book. The question was whether he should teach them how he had learned to interpret it, or show how others had done so. He would be very sorry to teach his children Unitarianism as a parrot is taught. He felt that we, as Unitarians, did not teach our children as much of the Bible as we ought to do. He would not read straight through from Genesis to Revelations; the more interesting and instructive parts would take as much time as he would be likely to give to it.

Dr. Vance Smith said he agreed in the main with Mr. Bannister's remarks. In the teaching of the Bible everything depended on the teacher. The teachers should have some rational knowledge of what they are teaching. The Bible is a very mixed book. It began ages before Christ, when men had very peculiar ideas on many religious and moral subjects. A wise teacher should have mastered these. The Bible literature was evidently intended to show the development of religion from a lower to higher state, culminating in the religion of Jesus Christ. If you make him your guiding principle it will give you a key that will unlock every problem. Give the children, if you like, an idea of the succession of the books; but above all, give them the latest ideas as given by Jesus. If you take the psalms, for example, you could not read them right through. Sometimes the Psalmist invokes curses on his enemies—are we to teach our children that? We might use the bad as a warning if we liked, and the good as a stimulus. He (the speaker) found great difficulty in finding suitable teachers; you could find plenty of a sort. What we want is to create a moral impression. Now that we have Board Schools all over the country, we do not need to teach them the elements of knowledge. What we want is to make a moral impression; too many of our teachers were unfit for that work. It had been asked, Am I to teach them what I believe to be true, or am I to teach them other peoples' ideas? I am bound to teach them what I believe—that is the truth to me. It has been said by so-doing I shall influence the minds of the children; why, that is what I teach them for. If you can find time and suitable minds, tell them other peoples' ideas. But above all, give them the highest and best that you know, be it Unitarian or Trinitarian. In conclusion, Dr. Smith expressed the pleasure it gave him to come out to that little country town and to partake of their hospitality.

Mr. M'Clelland said he had not been a Sunday School teacher for a long time. He had in his experience found that the best thing was to

get the confidence of the children and make them respect you. Then when they ask your opinion or advice they will respect it. It was, he thought, a serious question whether the Bible was a suitable book for use in Sunday Schools. Many parts of the book were not suitable for children, but a judicious use of the book might be of service. He however agreed with some of the previous speakers, that, as a whole, the Bible was not a suitable book for the Sunday School. With regard to the teaching of our special theology, he said if you have a thorough belief you should teach the children it. He thought, however, children should not be taught doctrinal subjects unless they introduced them themselves.

Mr. John R. Neill said he had heard the paper with pleasure. He thought it, however, rather old-fashioned. He very much agreed with Mr. M'Clelland's remarks thereon.

Mr. Street said Mr. Kelly had submitted a grave subject wisely. In the main he agreed with him. Some words, however, he disapproved of as used by him; for example, the word infidel. He did not know any word that was more abused than this one. He would advise his friends to carefully avoid the use of it in reference to any opinions whatever. He thought some of the speakers had rather misinterpreted Mr. Kelly's meaning. He thought the essayist meant to convey that he would rather have his children taught by one who reverenced the Bible than by one who sneered at it. He (the speaker) however did not think there were many people who sneered at the Bible; there were very many clever men, men as well read as Dr. Smith himself, who criticised the Bible severely, but they did not sneer at it. He agreed with the essayist in his remarks on the importance of the home influence; for the time, the mother and father stood as Almighty God to the children. He agreed with him also that it was a good thing for the father to call the children around him to engage in family worship; but he could not agree that it followed that a man must be a good man because he did so. His experience led him, he regretted to say, to find out that a man might be the greatest hypocrite while engaging daily in such worship. Speaking with reference to the use of the Bible in the Sunday School, he said the Bible is not a book, it is a collection of books; it is a literature extending over long years. He thought we should more appreciate the books if they were bound separately. When we speak of reverence to the Bible are we not confused in our ideas? we surely do not mean reverence for all that is in the book; but rather that we reverence all that is good and pure there. With reference to the teaching of our special theology he asked, What is our theology? He thought he had found a sort of common ground, and there were many people who agreed with him as far as he went, but some went much farther. We can teach the children what we *know*, but what we *think* we may also tell them; but we must let them know that it is only our thought. His way would be, not to teach what we think, but to set it forth, and the reasons which have led us to adopt the conclusions. We are right in teaching what we know.

After a few words from the Chairman, a vote of thanks to Mr. Kelly was moved by Mr. Street, seconded by Mr. Bannister, and carried unanimously. Mr. Kelly briefly replied, and the meeting separated.

THE BREAKFAST.

The usual Breakfast in connection with the Unitarian Society's Anniversary took place on Tuesday, 29th of April, in the Lombard Street Hall. There was a good attendance. Amongst those present were—Revs. J. C. Street in the chair—Dr. G. V. Smith, Thos. Dunkerley, B.A.; J. J. Wright, J. A. Kelly, E. Solly Anthony, M.A.; G. W. Bannister, and Messrs. J. R. Neill, J. Ritchie, D. Bulmer, R. M'Calmont, F.C.S.; H. Hyndman, LL.D.; T. M'Clelland, J.P.; W. J. Roche, J. F. Mulligan, J. M'Caw, M.D.; James Campbell, W. G. Mulligan, and F. Charles.

Mr. Dunkerley having said grace, an excellent breakfast was partaken of by those present, after which Mr. Bannister returned thanks.

The Chairman called on Mr. Dunkerley to read some letters of apology that he had received. Letters were read from Mr. Ierson and Mr. Wade regretting that Mr. Preston was unable to be present from London; and from the Northumberland and Durham Unitarian Association.

The Chairman, the Rev. J. C. Street, said he had not volunteered for the office that he held that day. He had hoped that Sir Edward Porter Cowan, Lord Lieutenant of County Antrim, would have been there to occupy that position, but circumstances had prevented him from doing so. They were, he said, celebrating that day the 55th anniversary of the Unitarian Society. During the whole period good men and true, and brave women and as true, had been united for the purpose of spreading a knowledge of the liberal principles with which they were identified throughout the North of Ireland. Many changes had taken place during that period, some of which, at any rate, had been in the direction of a larger liberality and a broader charity. In the main they had entered into a goodly heritage. They in the present day had gone further than their ancestors; the revelations of science and philosophy had made known to us what was not known to them. The Society in olden times was an eminently controversial one. They had to fight for the doctrine of the Unity of God against that of the Trinity. During that period it was necessary that their banner should be fairly seen, and that underneath that banner should be gathered men who would fight for the cause with which they were identified. We were still attached to the idea of the undivided unity of God. But we had found under the word Unitarian another and more extended meaning. Unitarianism signified to us unity among the brethren, unity in the world, unity in the work of God, and unity in Him who filled all things. If we put a larger meaning into the words, we were not departing from the old tradition. We still love the old name. This Unitarian Society, since it had been established under its present management, had determined to know no divisions and no sects. They had kept their doors open to any man, whether he belonged to any of their churches or not, who wished to identify himself with that Society. They knew that there were differences in our churches, and they rejoiced at it; they thought it was our great strength. There were still some who, unfortunately, refused to join with them, and they said now, as they had always said in the past, that they would be delighted to welcome them back again, and if necessary to go three-fourths of the way to meet them. He called upon Dr. Hyndman to move the first resolution.

Dr. Hyndman said he had undertaken that for which he was afraid he was not as competent as he might be; but he would take courage from the hope that the resolution would be heartily received by them. He begged to move:—

"That we offer to Dr. Vance Smith a warm welcome to Belfast, and heartily thank him for his services at Second Rosemary Street and Moneyrea; that we rejoice in seeing him amongst us, and gladly record our appreciation of his great services in biblical scholarship, and his work on the Committee for the Revision of the New Testament; and that we especially hail him as one of the reverent scholars who, while eagerly desirous of treasuring whatever truth has been made known in the past, is full of hope and trust as to God's revelations to be made known in the minds, consciences, and characters in the ages yet to be."

His resolution was one of thanks to the gentleman they had heard on Sunday, and he was sure they would all heartily approve it. His own admiration for those discourses far exceeded his power of expression. They had had many distinguished visitors to that Society, but never one more so than on the present occasion. Dr. Smith held a position which required the utmost tact and judgment as President of Carmarthen College. The teaching of that College is not confined to our theology. But this was not the only way in which his impartiality had been testified to. He need hardly tell them that Dr. Smith had been one of those selected scholars of our day to revise the New Testament. We were not perhaps in everything agreed with Dr. Smith, still in the

most part we agreed with him. For his own part, perhaps, he was quite prepared to accept his idea when he spoke of the earning of future life. He had great pleasure in moving the resolution.

Mr. Dunkerley had great pleasure in seconding the resolution, because not only our own sect but all sects owed a debt of gratitude to the body of which Dr. Smith was one. There is one gain we see on first opening the revised book: he referred to the abolition of the headings, which were a theology in themselves, that had no business to be there. Our whole denomination felt joy and pride when our visitor was chosen one of the body of revisers, and watched with deep interest the discussion that took place at first with reference to him, in which the late much beloved Dean Stanley took such a creditable part.

Mr. M'Clelland, J.P., supported resolution. He had seldom or ever heard anything more finished than those discourses of Sunday. Everything he had heard then had pleased him, and he returned his thanks and those of his congregation for them.

Dr. Smith said he was at a loss to express in worthy manner his sense of their kindness. It had been a great pleasure to him to come over here and to partake of the good feeling which here exists. He was sure the words that had been spoken went far beyond the merits of the case. With reference to the Chairman's remarks he would say he went fully with him in reference to the freedom of our churches. He did not think any man had a right to limit and define who was a Christian. If any man should come and say, I am willing to work with you in a Christian spirit, that should be sufficient. We have no right to define and limit the Church. He agreed with Mr. Street that it was the only position in which it was possible to obtain unity. The one great thing was that we should get up to the standard of our great Master. Our practice was not yet at all up to the great principles of Christ. Speaking with reference to the word Unitarian, he said that in getting beyond the controversial aspect of the word we really go back to the origin of the word. He believed the origin of the word was really unity—the working together for liberty. We are doing what will bring together the scattered disciples of Christianity. Few as we are, the principle is great, strong and true; and we shall be happy if we are the humblest instruments of making it prevail.

Mr. Bannister then moved the following resolution:—

"That we are glad to know there is a spirit of unity among all the organizations throughout the United Kingdom established in connection with the Free Churches; and that we extend a hearty welcome to the representatives from England and Scotland present, and through them to the churches and organizations which they represent."

He said they had never had a more distinguished representative at any time than Dr. Smith. They had representatives that day from England, Scotland, and Wales. They had the right sort of a representative from England, and Scotland's representative, though not bodily present, was, he believed, here in Belfast. Unity and uniformity, he said, were not the same thing. To his mind there were only two choices for a man—authority or liberty. There were many creeds and churches, he said; but just as the sea is tossed above, when below the surface there is perfect calm, so in the world, he thought, below the surface, there was real unity; and he believed that they had found the principles of it. He thought the name Unitarian had arisen, not from the idea of the unity of God, but from unity of another kind—the unity of men.

Mr. Anthony had much pleasure in seconding the resolution. It was, he said, a resolution of a very comprehensive kind. He could not say from his own knowledge that there was this spirit of unity abroad in the world, but he was very glad to take it on trust that it was so. He thought it was peculiar that he and Mr. Bannister, the two latest importations into this country, should welcome the visitors; and Irishmen would, in his opinion, have been more suitable. He supposed it was because of the dearth of native Irish ministers.

Mr. Kelly supported the resolution. He

said he felt, though in his own country, as if he were in a strange one, there were so many English present. It was, he might say, another but a very pleasant English invasion. He had great pleasure in supporting the resolution, and in knowing that the spirit of unity was abroad.

Mr. Wright, replying, said he represented a very large constituency, consisting of 64 Sunday Schools, bound together in an Association to which delegates are sent by each school. The Association works in many ways. It sends out visitors. At that time they employed three, who visited and watched the whole conduct of the schools, and afterwards had a little talk with the teachers. This kept them up to the mark. During the winter months they employed special teachers to go and give model Sunday School lessons to teachers and scholars. In this way the Association affected the schools. They had examinations in their schools. He did not believe much himself in these examinations. He heard on last Friday, however, that they did a great deal of good. They employed gentlemen in the summer months with a knowledge of botany, geology, &c. These gentlemen took out a lot of the scholars and teachers to some place selected by themselves. Then they had tea together, and he gave them a lecture, either on the specimens they had collected or on some that he had brought with him. Thus scholars are brought together who would not meet under other circumstances. Then every year the Association publishes Whitsuntide hymns, at a ridiculously low price. If any of those present wanted a really good pennyworth of music, they could not do better than go to No. 16, Queen's Arcade, and get a copy. Then on Whitsunday they had a great assembly of the children in the Free Trade Hall, at which these hymns were used. Again, on Good Friday they have what is called the "Good Friday Meeting." Last Friday they had one at Mossley. Mr. Wright then said he would like very much to have been with them yesterday (Monday); but he only received marching orders on Thursday night, and it was then too late to arrange for his pulpit on Sunday. The Belfast Association was older than theirs. He thought that if persistence was any proof of reality, then this Society must be a very real thing; because through bad words and good it had persisted in its good work.

Mr. Bulmer having moved that Mr. Street leave the chair and that Mr. M'Clelland do take the same, moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Street for his services as Chairman. He said this resolution did not require any bolstering up by eloquence on his part. They could always rely on Mr. Street. They had expected a gentleman who now occupies a high position to preside. But if they had felt any regret at first, it went when they heard the Chairman's opening address. Mr. Street was really the pivot on which the Association turned.

Mr. Mulligan seconded the motion. He said it was unnecessary for him to speak of the services of Mr. Street; he might speak from that till the evening meeting without mentioning one half of them.

Mr. Street, in reply, said he was very grateful for the kind and generous words that had been spoken concerning him.

THE EVENING MEETING.

THE President, Rev. T. Dunkerley, occupied the chair in the Lecture Hall, and spoke as follows:—

My friends and fellow-members of the Unitarian Society,—It seemed good to your General Committee to elect me, 12 months since, to the office of President of your Society, and I now thank them and you all for the honour you have conferred upon me. A Unitarian, not by birth, but by conviction, I esteem it a privilege to do what I can to promote the cause I love. I could not refuse the office you put upon me, and I trust that your expectations have not been disappointed by the way in which I have discharged its duties. There are many among you who could, I know, have performed those duties with greater dignity and better effect. But I have always met with such generous consideration from your other officers, that it has been a pleasure to me to work with them, and the honour has had no arduous and counter-balancing difficulties.

Our Society is a religious society, its aim is to promote religion. You have heard, I am sure, as I have often heard, good and earnest people express their fears as to the future of religion. We hear them deplore the irreligious, the materialistic tendencies of our time. But what the good people really deprecate is not more active now than in any former age. At all times that which appeals to the senses will be more noisy and more persistent than what appeals only to the spirit. Men cannot refuse attention to their bodily wants, while the needs of their higher nature can easily be postponed. Things of time, in their prominent obtrusiveness, are for ever threatening to thrust aside the less demonstrative claims of eternal things. This is no new feature: it is the world-old conflict of the temporal with the spiritual.

Experience may teach us that the claims of religion cannot be altogether or for ever ignored. We need not fear that religion, which has brightened and enriched human life, and tended to raise it to its present elevation, and which promises yet greater results, can ever lose its hold over the human mind. Whenever man rises above the mere animal, some faint germs of religion accompany, if they do not constitute, the development; and history and experience demonstrate how near to impossible it is to eradicate these germs. Very striking is the story of George Sand, the celebrated French novelist. Born in the sad times that followed the mad outbreak of the French Revolution, she was brought up by her guardians without any religious instruction. But she tells us how, in some half-waking vision, her inner need clothed itself in a deity whom she imagined for herself; and how, upon a secret and woodland shrine, she sacrificed to him, not by slaying, but by setting free; and how, when a bird released upon his altar lingered for a moment among the branches of the shadowing tree, she took the sign as a token of acceptance.

Refuse a religion to a human soul, and it seems that it will create one for itself.

Even stronger evidence as to the innate and indestructible character of religion is afforded by the fact of its surviving the grossest perversions and the most monstrous caricatures. Outward force and hideous misrepresentation may have crippled its manifestation for a time, but from that which was supposed to be its final dungeon, or its tomb, it has again and again sprung forth, phœnix-like, with new-born life.

In seeking, then, to promote religion, our Society is not wasting its energies on a shadowy chimera, but is employing them in a field rich with promise for the good of mankind.

But religion is presented to men in very different shapes. This is a fact we are not permitted to forget. Each must choose the form that best commends itself to him. Our choice, made not in wilfulness, but with deliberation and sometimes with pain, separates us from our neighbours, or rather separates our neighbours from us, though the loving arms of true religion can never be stretched forth to repel, but only to embrace. While others hold that religion is a supernatural gift for which men can only wait, we think that it is a natural endowment which it is our duty to develop by holy activity. While others hold that it is at war with the rest of our being, we hold that, like all the divine works, it must be in harmony with our other endowments, and especially with the highest of all, our reason. And in times past this has been the gulf of separation between us and our orthodox brethren. It is urged against us that we make too much of reason; that ours is a rational faith. We feel that it is not we who make too much of reason, but that our brethren make too little use of it; and we recognise the charge of ours being a rational faith not as a stigma or defect, but as a noble quality of which we are proud. We acknowledge that there are gradations of worth in the various parts of our complete being, but conceive that those parts are not in antagonism, but each is meant to contribute to the smooth working and the worth and happiness of the whole wondrous self. The animal part of us should serve the mental, and our divinely given reason blossom into religion, the noblest characteristic and high crown of our being, which links us spiritually with the Great Spirit who rules and blesses all.

And, again, when it is urged against us that our beliefs differ so widely that we have no common creed, we feel that this is not disparagement but praise; for uniformity of belief can only result from intellectual torpidity, and divergence of opinion is a necessary preliminary to the truer and higher harmony which results from the mental independence of each, and constitutes not the weakness, but the glory and strength of our cause. This spiritual freedom enables us to rise above and to discard superstition, buttressed as it may be by authority, and to seek for the sanction of our faith in no eternal confession or creed, but only in the sanctuary of the soul itself, where the human spirit may enter into direct communion with the divine.

Our Society seeks to promote rational religion by the presentation of the truth taught by Jesus, sanctioned by our own spirits, which shall redeem souls from the bondage of authority and error, and make them free with the glad consciousness of our heavenly Father's love.

Outsiders may say, "See how slow is your growth?" and even earnest-hearted ones in our own ranks, often disappointed, may be disposed to despair and cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

But this is the general experience of all enduring movements. That which is to bless the ages can be no mushroom-growth of a day. And the faith that the truth must at length prevail, that

"The eternal years of God are hers,"

should keep us steady in our ranks, doing with zeal our part for the cause which is not so much ours as His who rules over the destinies of nations and of individuals. Yea, a careful survey of our surroundings cannot fail to reveal to us marks of encouragement, signs that the religious world of to-day is moving in our direction—the direction of rational thought and spiritual freedom. Old tyrannies are losing their hold over men's minds; old creeds, once truculent in their power, are retiring into the shadows of obscurity, and the truth for which we have witnessed, that religion is a life, not a creed, is being accepted by churches who once fiercely condemned us for its advocacy. Whether the dawn of the better day be near or far-off, our duty is plain. We must bear steady testimony to what we hold to be the truth; in good report and evil, we must keep our conscience clear; we must not shrink from toil or sacrifice if that be required of us, but, devoted to the cause we know is holy, go straight on, "bating not a jot of heart or hope," and trust the result to Him whose servants—nay, to use the apostle's expression—whose "co-workers" we desire to be.

The Rev. J. C. Street (Hon. Secretary) then read the Annual Report and Financial Statement as follows:—

"Your Society has completed the 55th year of its existence. The Committee appointed by you at your last Annual Meeting now submit to you a report of their labours.

"The General Committee, at its first meeting, unanimously elected the Rev. Thomas Dunkerley, B.A., of Comber, as President for the year; and also appointed a large Sunday School Committee.

"At the first meeting of the Executive Committee, T. M'Clelland, Esq., J.P., was elected Chairman, and at the first meeting of the Sunday School Committee, J. M. Darbishire Esq., was elected Chairman, and Rev. T. Dunkerley, Secretary.

"The Executive Committee met 16 times during the year. The attendance of members was as follows:—

W. A. Adamson,	0	R. M'Calmont, F.C.S.	4
Rev. G. W. Bannister,	1	Dr. John M'Caw,	5
John Bennett,	1	T. M'Clelland, J.P.	12
Rev. J. H. Bibby,	5	Dr. J. Polly,	2
D. Bulmer,	14	J. Worthington,	0
Rev. J. A. Kelly,	2	M. Smith, *Treasurer*,	7
Rev. A. Lancaster,	1	Rev. T. Dunkerley, *Pres.*,	8
D. W. Moore,	0	J. M. Darbishire, *Secs.*	9
J. F. Mulligan,	8	Rev. J. C. Street, *Secs.*	16

"The Sunday School Committee met 11 times, and the attendance of its members was as follows:—

Miss J. E. Bruce,	2	J. M. Darbishire,	6
,, Coleman,	4	Rev. T. Dunkerley, B.A.	6
,, G. H. Coe,	8	Rev. J. A. Kelly,	3
,, Darbishire,	0	R. M'Calmont, F.C.S.,	3
,, Dobbin,	6	Rev. W. Reynolds, B.A.,	2
,, E. Martin,	7	Rev. J. C. Street,	11
,, May,	5	J. Worthington,	0
,, Ritchie,	3	Rev. A. Lancaster,	2
Rev. G. W. Bannister,	2	D. Bulmer,	7
Rev. J. H. Bibby,	6		

"The Treasurer began the year with a balance in favour of the Society amounting to £45 12s 8d. It will be seen from his present report that the balance in his hands at the close of the present financial year is £32 7s 11d.

"The sales at the Depository during the year amounted to £250 4s 10½d. This is by no means a satisfactory amount of business, and your Committee hope to see a change for the better in the present year.

"The *Chronicle and Index* has been published regularly, and is evidently greatly appreciated by large numbers of persons both in Ireland and England. A little further effort on the part of its friends, and its publication would entail no cost to the Society.

"Your Society was duly represented at the Annual Meetings of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, the London Sunday School Association, the Scottish Unitarian Association, and the Northumberland and Durham Unitarian Association. In each case your representatives received a most cordial welcome.

"The Committee confidently ask from you a cordial welcome for the representatives of these Associations who are present at our Anniversary this year.

"It is pleasant to note that your Committee received applications for tracts and books from widely-scattered districts; and sometimes they send to the Continent of Europe, and to our distant Colonies. During the year now ended they have sent to Rome, Spain, and New Zealand.

"During the summer months of last year, on the Sunday evenings, the Rev. J. C. Street, with the friendly co-operation of Revs. T. Dunkerley, W. Reynolds, and G. Bannister, conducted Mission Services at Hopeton Street; and there is reason to hope that some good resulted therefrom.

"Your Sunday School Committee had many meetings during the year, selecting books for classes and libraries, and arranging for conferences. In addition to the Conference at Moneyrea, in connection with the last Anniversary, there were three others held during the year: at Comber, on August 30th, when the Rev. A. Lancaster read a paper on "Honours in Sunday Schools;" at Rosemary Street, on Nov. 4th, when the Rev. T. Dunkerley read a paper on "The Duty of the Congregation towards the Sunday School;" and at Mountpottinger, on Feb. 11th, when Mr. Darbishire read a paper on "Self-Culture." At all these meetings there was an encouraging attendance, and the discussions which followed were of the most instructive character. These Conferences have become a very valuable agency for bringing our teachers and ministers together and promoting the intelligent investigation of all matters bearing upon Sunday School work.

"It is a matter of profound regret to your Committee that Mr. Darbishire, who has for so many years been one of the most useful workers in connection with your Society, has had to lay down his work among us, in consequence of taking up his residence in England. He will carry with him the esteem, respect, and affection of all his colleagues. Your Committee presented an address to Mr. Darbishire before he left Ireland.

"One by one the workers in our great field of labour pass away from us, and leave us to seek new colleagues to enable us to meet the great requirements of the age. Our duty is imperative—to toil faithfully on, knowing that the night is coming when no man can work; and to seek by every means in our power to spread among our brethren, not simply broad and comprehensive views of religious truth, but also to promote a sweeter piety, and a more beneficent morality among mankind."

Dr. *The Treasurer in A/c with The Belfast Unitarian Society for the Year ending 31st Dec., 1885.* Cr.

To Balance from 1884,						£45	12	8
„ Subscriptions—								
Belfast,			£35	17	0			
Comber,			1	10	0			
Ballee,			0	10	0			
Carrickfergus,			0	12	6			
Rademon,			0	8	0			
Moneyrea,			2	2	6			
						41	0	0
„ *Chronicle and Index*—								
Donations,			9	13	6			
Advertisements,			3	16	0			
						13	9	6
„ Sunday School Conference—								
Breakfast,						3	18	0
„ Congregational Collections—								
Belfast,			30	15	4			
Moneyrea,			2	15	9			
						33	11	1
„ Receipts at Depository,						250	4	10½
						386	1	1½

By Incidentals—								
Salary to Agent,			£30	0	0			
Sundries,			21	10	2			
Deputations,			1	15	0			
Anniversary,			5	17	3			
Rent and Taxes,			32	12	5			
Collector for 1884,			1	18	6			
						93	13	4
„ *Chronicle and Index*—								
Printing, &c.,						26	15	0
„ Sunday School Conference—								
Breakfast,						5	4	0
„ Books and Stationery,						229	15	10½
„ Balance,						32	7	11
						386	1	1½

Dr. Hyndman, in moving "That the Report and Statement of Accounts be received, adopted, and published in the *Chronicle and Index*," referred to several matters of detail in the Report and Statement of Accounts. He congratulated the Society on its prosperous condition. The Society had sustained an irreparable loss by the removal from amongst them of Mr. James Darbishire, as there was no more earnest or painstaking member of it than he was.

Mr. Herbert Darbishire seconded the adoption of the Report, which was passed.

The following were elected as Officers and Committee for 1886:—

Treasurer:

Rev. J. C. Street.

Secretaries:

R. M'Calmont, F.C.S.
Rev. J. H. Bibby.

Committee:

Rev. E. S. Anthony, M.A.
Mr. W. A. Adamson.
Rev. G. W. Bannister.
Mr. D. Bulmer.
Rev. T. Dunkerley, B.A.
Mr. T. Henderson.
Rev. J. A. Kelly.
Mr. J. F. Mulligan.
Dr. John M'Caw.
Mr. T. M'Clelland, J.P.
Mr. J. M'Williams.
Mr. J. R. Neill.
Dr. John Polly.
Mr. M. Smith.
Mr. A. K. Stewart.

Mr. J. Mulligan moved—"That we offer to our preacher of the Anniversary Sermons a hearty welcome, and thank him for the thoughtful and able sermons he preached in Belfast and Moneyrea."

The Rev. G. W. Bannister seconded the motion, which was passed by acclamation.

Dr. Vance Smith said it was gratifying to think that his services had been appreciated; but, on the other hand, he considered it a great privilege to one who lived, as he did, in a remote corner of Wales, to travel and see the world, and he could not but thank them for the honour they paid him by their invitation. Mr. Bannister had referred to having made the acquaintance of one of his works, and the influence which the perusal of that had on his mind. It was not the first time he had heard a kind expression of a similar character. It was gratifying to know that anything he had written had had a good influence. How came these results? It resulted from one easy and simple principle. When he was a student at York he had been taught he must understand the Scriptures in the sense in which they were originally written. That was the key. If our theologians would only do that there would soon be an end to the dogmatic theology which prevailed in the Churches. They interpreted the Scriptures in the sense of their established creeds. They could not do anything else as things stood. They were bound down by legal as well as other restrictions. In the schedules attached to the deeds of many congregational churches were specified the doctrines to be preached in the pulpits, and should a minister so advance as to outgrow the old limits he was liable to be ejected from his position. A case of this kind had not long ago occurred at Huddersfield. The deacons of a church were dissatisfied that the minister would not preach the doctrine of eternal punishment, and that doctrine being specified in the schedule a legal tribunal decided that the minister should be ejected from his office. In this respect there was no more liberty among most Nonconformists than in the Church of England. They were equally bound, and there was no true liberty, generally speaking, among such bodies. In the Unitarian Church they had generally no such strict limitation of doctrine. Many of their churches were erected simply for the worship of God. The old system forbade progress and left no provision for growth. Until they got something like freedom—whether in the form of disestablishment or otherwise—there would be no true liberty of thought, but the Churches would be bound not to the Scriptures, but to old creeds and doctrines which were really the outcome of ancient speculation in philosophy and religion. That Association had before it ample scope for work in Belfast in rectifying the dogmatic teaching which they looked upon as a perversion of the Scriptures.

Mr. W. C. Dobbin moved—"That we hereby express our good-will towards all Sunday School teachers and Associations, and welcome the Rev. J. J. Wright as the representative of the Manchester District Sunday School Association."

Mr. Bulmer seconded the resolution, which was supported by Mr. J. R. Neill, and passed by acclamation.

Mr. Wright suitably replied.

The Rev. J. C. Street moved the following resolution:—"That we rejoice in the signs of growing enlightenment and liberality in the world, and look forward with earnest hope to the time when party names shall be no more, when sects shall cease to be, and the Church of God shall be seen to be as wide as humanity and as high as heaven." He said that the keen observer who followed the course of events was able to see very clearly what these signs of enlightenment were. The last ten years had shown them this extraordinary fact—that most of the careful and profound students of science had become the teachers of many of the theological professors who so long had held possession of the world in matters pertaining to religion. He did not know whether they had seen the controversy between the Prime Minister and Professor Huxley, but if they had they would have seen this remarkable fact—that the Prime Minister had fallen back upon the old theological teachings of the Church of which he was the most distinguished member, while the profound student of science was able to correct his blunders and open to him a region of thought that even Mr. Gladstone had not been able to reach.

Mr. Thomas M'Clelland, J.P., seconded the resolution, which was passed unanimously.

A vote of thanks was then accorded to the Chairman, on the motion of Mr. Street, after which the proceedings concluded.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1885 RECEIVED BY TREASURER.

Miss Aston,	Belfast,	..	£0	2	6
D. Bulmer,	,,	..	0	2	6
Mrs. D. Bulmer,	,,	..	0	2	6
S. Barry,	,,	..	0	2	6
Mrs. Barry,	,,	..	0	2	6
Miss Barker,	,,	..	0	5	0
H. Burden, M.D.	,,	..	0	5	0
Miss J. E. Bruce,	,,	..	0	10	0
Mrs. Brydon,	,,	..	0	5	0
Mrs. Coleman,	,,	..	0	5	0
Miss Coleman,	,,	..	0	10	0
Sir E. P. Cowan,	Lord Lieut. of Antrim,	..	2	10	0
James Campbell,	Belfast,	..	0	10	0
James Carr,	,,	..	0	10	0
Miss Coe,	,,	..	0	2	6
A. M. Carlisle,	,,	..	0	2	6
Daniel Curell,	,,	..	0	10	0
N. A. Campbell,	Belfast,	..	£0	2	6
W. C. Dobbin,	,,	..	0	10	0
Miss Dobbin,	,,	..	0	10	0
J. M. Darbishire,	,,	..	1	0	0
Mrs. Darbishire,	,,	..	0	5	0
Miss Darbishire,	,,	..	0	5	0
F. E. Dale,	,,	..	0	10	0
W. W. Drummond,	,,	..	0	5	0
R. G. Dunville, D.L.,	,,	..	0	10	0
John Davidson,	,,	..	0	2	6
Henry Ferguson,	,,	..	0	10	0
George Fisher,	,,	..	0	5	0
Miss K. M. Fisher,	,,	..	0	2	6
Miss M. L. Fisher,	,,	..	0	2	6
Miss L. E. Fisher,	,,	..	0	2	6
H. J. Fisher,	,,	..	0	2	6
R. W. Gordon, J.P.,	,,	..	0	5	0
John Greenfield,	,,	..	0	5	0
Sir E. J. Harland, Bart.,	,,	..	1	1	0
Hugh Hyndman, LL.D.,	,,	..	0	10	0
Mrs. Hugh Hyndman,	,,	..	0	10	0
Mrs. Hyndman,	,,	..	0	10	0
G. G. Henderson,	,,	..	0	5	0
Thomas Henderson,	,,	..	0	2	6
John Johnston,	,,	..	0	2	6
Alexander King,	,,	..	0	5	0
R. M. Kennedy,	,,	..	0	10	0
J. W. Kinnear,	,,	..	0	5	0
James Kinnear,	,,	..	0	2	6
Mrs. Lipsey,	,,	..	0	5	0
J. F. Lowry,	,,	..	0	2	6
D. W. Moore,	,,	..	0	2	6
J. F. Mulligan,	,,	..	0	2	6
R. Murray,	,,	..	0	5	0
F. Manderson,	,,	..	0	2	6
Miss Martin,	,,	..	0	2	6
Miss May,	,,	..	0	2	6
James Moore,	,,	..	0	10	0
Samuel Moore,	,,	..	0	2	6
Mrs. Millin,	,,	..	0	2	6
Adam Millin,	,,	..	0	2	6
John Montgomery,	,,	..	0	2	6
Mrs. Malcolmson,	,,	..	0	10	0
William Moore,	,,	..	0	5	0
Miss Minnis,	,,	..	0	2	6
J. L. Marshall,	,,	..	0	5	0
John M'Giffen,	,,	..	0	5	0
J. M'William,	,,	..	0	2	6
Thomas M'Clelland, J.P.,	,,	..	0	10	0
Robert M'Calmont, F.C.S.,	,,	..	0	5	0
Mrs. Robert M'Calmont,	,,	..	0	2	6
William M'Calmont,	,,	..	0	2	6
H. J. M'Cance, J.P.,	,,	..	0	10	0
George M'Auliffe, J.P.,	,,	..	1	0	0
Mrs. M'Mechan,	,,	..	0	2	6
John M'Connell, J.P.,	,,	..	0	2	6
Dr. M'Caw,	,,	..	0	2	6
T. E. Osborne,	,,	..	0	2	6

Mrs. Nelson,	Belfast,	..	£0	10	0
John R. Neill,	,,	..	0	10	6
Dr. Nelson,	,,	..	0	10	0
W. Palfreyman,	,,	..	0	5	0
Miss Prenter,	,,	..	0	2	6
E. F. Patterson,	,,	..	0	2	6
W. J. Pirrie,	,,	..	0	10	6
Dr. Polly,	,,	..	0	2	6
William Rankin,	,,	..	0	2	6
Mrs. Rice,	,,	..	0	2	6
Samuel Riddell,	,,	..	0	5	0
John Ritchie,	,,	..	0	2	6
Mrs. Ritchie,	,,	..	0	2	6
Miss Ritchie,	,,	..	0	2	6
John Ritchie, jun.,	,,	..	0	2	6
W. B. Ritchie, J.P.,	,,	..	2	0	0
W. Robertson, J.P.,	,,	..	1	5	0
John Steele,	,,	..	0	2	6
Rev. J. C. Street,	,,	..	1	0	0
W. R. Stitt,	,,	..	0	2	6
Mansel Smith,	,,	..	0	5	0
John Simington,	,,	..	0	2	6
John Vinycomb,	,,	..	0	5	0
Miss Weir,	,,	..	0	2	6
G. W. Wolff,	,,	..	1	1	0
James Worthington,	,,	..	0	2	6
James Ward,	,,	..	0	2	6
D. Young,	,,	..	0	2	6

COUNTRY.

W. A. Adamson,	Carrickfergus,	..	£0	2	6
J. E. Adamson,	,,	..	0	2	6
W. Barron,	,,	..	0	2	6
James Logan,	,,	..	0	2	6
R. M'Gill,	,,	..	0	2	6
W. Davidson, J.P.,	Rademon,	..	0	2	6
Miss Johnston,	,,	..	0	3	0
Rev. J. A. Kelly,	,,	..	0	2	6
Rev. G. W. Bannister,	Moneyrea,	..	0	5	0
William Bennett,	,,	..	0	10	0
James Bennett,	,,	..	0	5	0
John Bennett,	,,	..	0	5	0
N. Bodel,	,,	..	0	2	6
D. M'Master,	,,	..	0	10	0
A. K. Stewart,	,,	..	0	5	0
J. B. Orr,	Comber,	..	0	2	6
Rev. T. Dunkerley, B.A.,	,,	..	0	10	0
James Shields,	,,	..	0	2	6
J. O. Abernethy,	,,	..	0	2	6
Alex. Shields,	,,	..	0	2	6
Thomas Andrews,	,,	..	0	2	6
Robert Simpson,	,,	..	0	2	6
J. Milling,	,,	..	0	2	6
David Todd,	,,	..	0	2	6
J. Chambers,	Ballee,	..	0	2	6
J. Bailie,	,,	..	0	2	6
Rev. J. H. Bibby,	,,	..	0	5	0

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